

William Heath Davis House
227 Eleventh Avenue
San Diego - New Town, San Diego County
California

HABS No. CAL-423

HABS
CAL
37. SANDI

2

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

ADDED
1961

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
1000 Geary Street
San Francisco, California

HABS
CAL.
37- SANDI
2-

PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
HISTORICAL AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CAL-423
Page 1

WILLIAM HEATH DAVIS HOUSE

New Town San Diego, San Diego County, California

ADDRESS: 227 Eleventh Avenue
OWNER: George Deyo
OCCUPANT: George Deyo
USE: Residence

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The House of William Heath Davis (founder of New Town San Diego), built in 1851, was probably the first permanent structure built in New Town by Americans. The materials for the building were brought around Cape Horn in the Brig "Cybell". The house was first erected on State Street, between Market and G Streets, and it was later moved to its present site at 227 Eleventh Avenue, between K and L Streets.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

In 1850 Davis who was in San Diego for a rest was advised by Andrew B. Gray, surveyor for the United States Boundary Commission, who knew Davis to be a man of means, that a town located near what is now the foot of Market Street would prosper. Both agreed to name the projected community "New Town".

Although only twenty-eight, Davis was already a trader with wide business connections. A serious business manner, blended with a friendly personality, revealed his New England and Hawaiian parentage; and further mellowing had come from his long contact with Spanish Californians. Like such other Yankee Californians as Thomas O. Larkin, John Marsh, Able Stearns, William Workman, and William Wolfskill, he was one of the most respected Americans in California before the gold rush.

CAL-423
Page 2

By March 16, 1850, he had signed up as partner with Gray, Jose' Antonio Aquirre, Miguel de Pedrorena and William C. Ferrell for the development of the New Town. Davis was to build a wharf and warehouse within eighteen months, in return for which he was to retain ownership of the land and improvements on which these stood. The partners obtained from the Alcalde of Old San Diego a tract of one hundred and sixty acres--the price being \$2,304. Davis added to his own holdings thirty-two quarter-blocks of land (102 lots) belonging to Miguel de Pedrorena, for which he paid thirteen or fourteen hundred dollars. Middletown, a similar bay tract between Old Town and New Town, was started by others that year. Davis' brother-in-law, Jose' Maria Estudillo, was a member of that group.

San Diego was politically transformed from a sleepy pueblo into the County Seat of one of twenty-eight new counties. The county was one of the first to organize, hold elections, and draw up a tax roll.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions - The basic rectangular building is 36'-7" wide by 22'-6" deep with an added kitchen 7'-0" by about 14'-0", thus the total depth is 27'-6". The building has two stories with an attic.

Foundation - Brick, wall to footing 8" to 12".

Wall Construction - The wood framing consists of 2" x 4" dove-tailed, thought to be knock down prefabricated units sent by ship from Portland, Maine, around Cape Horn. Drop siding (2 breaks) 5½" x 1", beveled on exterior.

Porches - The front porch is about 6'-0" x 10'-0" with floor raised four risers above grade. Two 6" square wood posts with small cap and base supported on a solid wood railing carry a 10" deep lintel which in turn carries the exposed rafters of the flat roof. (About 8" projection) Jig sawn brackets occur as knee braces. The rear porch, 5'-0" x about 22'-6", extends from the added kitchen the rest of the way across the rear. It has a low pitched roof.

Chimneys - Two chimneys of brick brought from San Francisco extend from fireplaces on the first floor through the roof and are surmounted with pleasing brick corbeled caps.

CAL-423
Page 3

Doors - The entrance door is 2'-11 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 6'-10" x 1-3/8" with glazed upper panel and 3 lower wood panels. The side stiles and top rail are 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ " and the bottom rail is 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". A 2" x 3" jamb on each side of the door separates a 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 6'-10 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", five panel sidelight of vari-colored glass. The exterior trim is a milled wood mould, 5-3/4" x 1-3/4".

Windows - Double hung, with 3/8" x 7/8" parting bead. On the front, the sash are 2'-6" x 5'-8", two light, three windows on the second floor and two on the first; all symmetrically arranged about the front door. The exterior trim consists of a 1" x 5" board, 2" thick sill, with a 1" x 2" apron. On the ends, the sash are 2'-4" x 4'-6", four light, arranged symmetrically with two on each floor and one in the attic. Same exterior trim.

Roof - The pitch is about 8 to 12 with wood shingles and metal gutters and downspouts.

The rake and eaves details are similar and consist of a cyma mould of about 3", a fascia board of about 4" and a soffit board with projection of about 12".

INTERIOR

The first floor plan has a central hall, front to rear, with a straight run stairway. Upon entering, the living room is to the right (with fireplace), a parlor is to the left, with the dining room to the rear, in which there is another fireplace. The original kitchen occupies the remaining fourth corner, but with a new kitchen to the rear of the dining room, the original kitchen has become a study.

On the second floor, there are four bed rooms in the four corners surrounding the upper central hall with the next run of stairs continuing to the attic.

Flooring - The finish floor is 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 3/4" T&G plank on 10" x 3/4" nominal butt joint sub-floor.

Stairway - The stairway is a fine typical colonial example with a 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 2" oval handrail springing from a newel cap of the same profile carried on simple turned newel post. The rail around the stair-well joins the stair run with a section curved on an 8" radius. Balusters are simple round turnings.

CAL-423

Page 4

The stairs are open string with 8" rise, $9\frac{1}{2}$ " tread. At the second floor a steep stairway continues to the attic. It is made of 2" x 10" stock, ladder fashion, with open risers.

Fireplace - The fireplace in the living room is of marble with a round topped opening, the mouldings, springing from marble plinth blocks each side, come against a deeply carved scroll key block forming semi-triangular panels with vertical side moulds and moulded marble shelf. Fire box is cast iron with cast iron trim mouldings conforming to marble opening.

Doors - 6'-8" x 2'-6" and 2'-8" x 1-3/8", four panel with raised moulds, $4\frac{1}{2}$ " stiles and top rail, $7\frac{1}{2}$ " bottom rail.

Wall Finish - Plaster papered.

Trim - Trim of openings is a rather deeply cut mould, $4\frac{1}{2}$ " wide and $2\frac{1}{2}$ " thick, the base board of plain 1" x 8".

Ceiling - Plastered and papered.

Lighting - Gas lights are still in the building.

REFERENCES

Andrew F. Rolle, William Heath Davis and the Founding of San Diego
William E. Smythe, History of San Diego I, p 108, pp 316-318

Prepared by,

Wm H. Porter

William H. Porter, AIA
San Diego Preservation Officer

July 1963

APPROVED:

Charles S. Pope

Charles S. Pope, AIA
Supervising Architect, Historic Structures
Western Office, Design and Construction
National Park Service

DATE: *September 10, 1963*

Addendum to
William Heath Davis House
227 Eleventh Avenue
San Diego
San Diego County
California

HABS No. CA-423

HABS
CAL,
37-SANDI,
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240